

DIVISION: FORMS 1 to 4AGE GROUP: 12 years and overSERIES:CURRENT AFFAIRSPROGRAMME 10 THE TAPAKUMA SCHEME

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Narr: Hello Boys and Girls,

If you live on the coastlands you'll know that there is one thing we are fighting against - and that is water. In front of us is the Sea; and the Sea is always ready to charge in upon us at high tide. And so in many places we've had to build a wall - a long wall to keep the sea water from our land.

But behind us we've got water too - vast expanses of it in our big rivers. And our big rivers have families - that is smaller rivers flowing into them and then creeks flowing into these smaller rivers. In some places there are lakes as well, and when the rainy season comes, the lakes overflow - and then the land for miles around becomes flooded. But there is something very odd about all this water, children, and that is: the water ^{never} ~~now~~ seems to behave itself the way we want it to.

Let's take an example to see what we mean. Just suppose you were a farmer on the Essequibo Coast - let's say not far from Anna Regina. A few miles to the South of your fields is the vast mouth of the Essequibo. And not very far to the West of you is the Pomeroon River. Behind you are three lakes - the Tapakuma, the biggest of the three, Lake Reliance and Lake Capoey.

When the rainy season comes - the rivers and the creeks are overflowing with water and the three lakes overflow too - the water begins to rise higher and higher on your land until it is too much for you and you can do nothing about it. Then the Dry Season comes and you need some water. But now the lakes are too low so now no water is flowing into your canals.

Well, unless you are a very determined farmer - you might think of giving up all this trouble and leaving your land and going somewhere else. And you know, boys and girls, this has happened over and over again in Essequibo. Many people have left their lands and gone away to Demerara and Berbice. This has happened so much that people have called Essequibo the Cinderella County - that is the neglected County.

But this won't be for much longer now. For last Saturday afternoon, the vast Tapakuma Irrigation Project began to work and everybody who went there felt that it would bring brighter days for the Essequibo Coast. The Minister of Works and Hydraulics Hon'ble Ram Karran expressed the bright hopes for the future in these words:

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.....The project, the opening of which we are about to witness, will provide a tremendous boost for the economy of this area. And this will be true not only of rice farming but of other forms of agriculture as well. The present area under rice will be increased to twenty thousand acres. In addition, with an assured supply of irrigation water, it is expected that about fifty per cent of the rice area will be planted with a spring crop. This increase should provide for the first time an economic ^{output} ~~through-put~~ for the central mill at Anna Regina. Present production is a great deal less than that mill can handle. The privately-owned mills in the area will also benefit and indeed it may be necessary to increase storage and drying facilities.

A survey indicates that there should likewise be expansion in the cultivation of coconuts, food crops, guavas, and other citrus fruits, milk, beef, pigs and other livestock, eggs and poultry meat.

Narr: The brighter days for the farmers in Essequibo became a reality when the Dr. the Hon'ble Cheddi Jagan started the pumps which

will control the flow of water on the farm lands.

OPR: PUMP SOUNDS: TAPE FXX 5 SECS THEN FADE UNDER FOR BBC DISC
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Narr: So children, let's have a look at this project for a while to find out what is going to happen. Now I hope you know your map of Essequibo fairly well - because what we are going to talk about is all on the map. If you look at a map of Essequibo, you'll find on the Coast not far from Suddie a place called Zorg-en-Vleight, a name that reminds us of the Old Dutch settlements. If you run your finger along the Coast from Zorg-en-Vleight you will come to a place called Somerset Berks. These two places are nineteen miles away from each other. All that area going as far as 5 miles aback will now have enough water in the dry season; and it won't be flooded in the Wet Season,

Well now, how is it done? You remember just now we talked about the Tapakuma Lake. We said that when the weather was dry it was difficult to get water out of the Lakes if you were far from it. The engineers have built a huge Dam on the Tapakuma River - there was an old dam there before but it was much nearer the Lake and so stored less water. This new dam will mean that a large amount of water will be kept inside.

You know when you dam up water like this what you call it - a reservoir. But there isn't only a dam there; there is a fine modern pumping station; so that when the water in the reservoir begins to go down the pumps will pull the water from the Tapakuma River into the reservoir. This is very good. But you know, children, in these things you don't have only one problem to face but several. And there was another big problem. The engineers noticed that if the water in the reservoir was raised quite high it overflowed into a pegasse Savannah - when this happens it is no use any more for irrigation. So they had to build up a big wall of clay - two and a half miles long. Then they had to dig out all the pegasse inside the wall. Now this

was quite a big job - because, you see, the pegasse is sometimes fifteen feet deep. But the engineers have done it and so the reservoir can now hold a vast amount of water.

OPINION: ^{PLAY} ^{THESE} ^{DESC} - ^{WHAT IS THE} ^{SOUND} ^{DS}.
But what about getting the water along nineteen miles of coastlands. This was an easier matter than making the reservoir. The engineers have dug a canal twenty miles long. And the water from not only the Tapakuma Lake but the two other lakes as well - this water - flows into the canal. This canal feeds a whole lot of little canals which run through the farmlands and give water to the farmers where they want it. And they will have this water all the year round.

The engineers have also built new drains and sluices to take off excess water - so there is little chance of the farmlands being overflowed now. And I'll tell you something interesting children. - The engineers didn't only dig new little canals for the fields. They dug up some old ones - old ones that had been used by abandoned sugar estates. You know boys and girls, there was a time when the Essequibo coast had a large number of flourishing sugar estates but one by one they went out of cultivation. The engineers are even using some old Dutch canals that were built long ago in the 18th Century.

So now the Cinderella County will have twenty-seven thousand more acres of good land to grow a number of crops - not only rice, but other crops like coconuts and citrus fruits. And where there is good land there will be lots of farmers. Farmers will now be quite eager to cultivate the land because now they know that the right amount of water will always be there for them.

And you know boys and girls we aren't the only people making dams and reservoirs. In many countries - underdeveloped like ours - men are throwing huge dams across rivers and turning difficult land into flourishing fields. But our problem is not land, we have a lot of that. - Our big problem is water - some-

times we have too much water and at other times too little.
The Tapakuma scheme marks the end of one round of that long
fight between us and the water - and in this case we have won.
That is why the Scheme is not only important for Essequibo but
for the whole of Guyana. There is another Scheme similar to
the Tapakuma Scheme. I'm referring to the Torani Canal in
Berbice which carries irrigation water - fresh water to seventy-
five ^{thousand} acres of farmlands on the Corentyne Coast.

And there will be other schemes all along the coast as
Guyana tackles her problems in a bigger and bigger way - and one
day we shall win our battle against the water - so that instead
of being our problem the water will be our useful servant.

OPR: **PUMP** SOUNDS FADE UNDER FOR BBC DISC 19A 101 AFTER 5 SECS

Cover by Glenda - a very charming 6

OPR: PLAY THEME *to you.*